

Republican Congressman from the State of Louisiana voted for the House bill, and one Republican Senator, Ms. SNOWE of Maine, voted for a version of health care reform in the Senate Finance Committee. Not a single vote beyond those two in support of health care reform.

In fact, some take great pride in the fact that they are never going to vote for health care reform until it comes down exactly as they want it. We have invited them into conversation. In fact, my friend, the Senator from Iowa, who is on the floor here today, was part of a conversation with Senator BAUCUS and four other Members of the Senate that went on, I am told, for weeks, if not months, in an effort to find bipartisan, common ground, and they could not. I am sorry they did not. It would have been a better day if we had a real bipartisan effort before us. But I thank the Senator from Iowa for his genuine heartfelt efforts in trying.

But we come here today without a Republican alternative to health care reform. We come here today facing the reality that if we fail this time, we will not address health care reform, I am afraid, in my political lifetime or in the lifetime of many people following this debate. It took 16 years since President Clinton last offered an effort to try. If we wait another 16 or 20 years, I cannot imagine what is going to happen.

We know what is going to happen to health insurance premiums. Ten years ago, for a family of four, the average cost of their family health insurance premium was \$6,000 a year—\$500 a month. Pretty steep, right? The average cost today, for a family of four, for their family health insurance premium: \$12,000 a year. It has doubled in a 10-year period of time, and it is going up so fast that it will double in the next 7 or 8 years to \$24,000 a year.

Imagine working and earning \$2,000 a month just to pay for your health insurance premium. That is it. Imagine how meager that coverage is going to be because each year you know what happens. The cost goes up and coverage goes down. What will it be 10 years from now? If you talk to people who are negotiating for contracts, such as labor unions, all they talk about is health insurance. They do not talk about wage increases. They talk about health insurance. Those are the issues that break down the negotiations and end up in work stoppages and strikes, it has become that contentious and that difficult.

Are we going to accept that? Is that the best we can do in America? I do not think so. Are we going to accept a strategy which says: We are going to slow down the business of the Senate to a crawl, or stop it, as they tried yesterday, in an effort to defeat even having a vote on health care reform?

Don't we owe the people of this country, at the end of this debate, a vote on health care reform? Shouldn't it be in a timely fashion?

Shouldn't we first pass this bill that funds our troops that is sitting on the floor here that passed the House 395 to 34? Why would we delay that funding of our troops in the midst of a war? Why don't we do that today before we break for lunch and say to our troops: "We took care of you."

I might add, in here there is a provision that extends unemployment benefits. Is there any doubt on the other side of the aisle that they will vote to extend unemployment benefits in the midst of a recession? The last vote we had was 97 to 0 on the floor of the Senate to extend unemployment benefits, and that was a few weeks back. I assume Republican Senators feel as Democratic Senators do, that in the midst of a recession, in the midst of the holiday season, we owe it to these families to try to help them out.

How could we in good conscience go home and celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah or whatever our holiday might be and say we want to be in the comfort and love of our families, to sit and have a glorious Christmas morning before the tree, and enjoy the blessings of this great Nation and the blessings of life, and then turn down the unemployed when it comes to their benefits? We could not do that in good conscience.

Why don't we do that today? Why do we wait until tomorrow? Why don't we say: Regardless of what your strategy is on health care reform, let's not shortchange the troops. Let's not leave them with any uncertainty. Let's not leave those unemployed with uncertainty as to whether they are going to get benefits they come to expect and deserve. I hope we can.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a recent article published in the New York Times relating to the trauma of joblessness in the United States.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Dec. 14, 2009]

POLL REVEALS TRAUMA OF JOBLESSNESS IN U.S.

(By Michael Luo and Megan Thee-Brenan)

More than half of the nation's unemployed workers have borrowed money from friends or relatives since losing their jobs. An equal number have cut back on doctor visits or medical treatments because they are out of work.

Almost half have suffered from depression or anxiety. About 4 in 10 parents have noticed behavioral changes in their children that they attribute to their difficulties in finding work.

Joblessness has wreaked financial and emotional havoc on the lives of many of those out of work, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll of unemployed adults, causing major life changes, mental health issues and trouble maintaining even basic necessities.

The results of the poll, which surveyed 708 unemployed adults from Dec. 5 to Dec. 10 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus four percentage points, help to lay bare the depth of the trauma experienced by millions across the country who are out of

work as the jobless rate hovers at 10 percent and, in particular, as the ranks of the long-term unemployed soar.

Roughly half of the respondents described the recession as a hardship that had caused fundamental changes in their lives. Generally, those who have been out of work longer reported experiencing more acute financial and emotional effects.

"I lost my job in March, and from there on, everything went downhill," said Vicky Newton, 38, of Mount Pleasant, Mich., a single mother who had been a customer-service representative in an insurance agency.

"After struggling and struggling and not being able to pay my house payments or my other bills, I finally sucked up my pride," she said in an interview after the poll was conducted. "I got food stamps just to help feed my daughter."

Over the summer, she abandoned her home in Flint, Mich., after she started receiving foreclosure notices. She now lives 90 minutes away, in a rental house owned by her father.

With unemployment driving foreclosures nationwide, a quarter of those polled said they had either lost their home or been threatened with foreclosure or eviction for not paying their mortgage or rent. About a quarter, like Ms. Newton, have received food stamps. More than half said they had cut back on both luxuries and necessities in their spending. Seven in 10 rated their family's financial situation as fairly bad or very bad.

But the impact on their lives was not limited to the difficulty in paying bills. Almost half said unemployment had led to more conflicts or arguments with family members and friends; 55 percent have suffered from insomnia.

"Everything gets touched," said Colleen Klemm, 51, of North Lake, Wis., who lost her job as a manager at a landscaping company last November. "All your relationships are touched by it. You're never your normal happy-go-lucky person. Your countenance, your self-esteem goes. You think, 'I'm not employable.'"

A quarter of those who experienced anxiety or depression said they had gone to see a mental health professional. Women were significantly more likely than men to acknowledge emotional issues.

Tammy Linville, 29, of Louisville, Ky., said she lost her job as a clerical worker for the Census Bureau a year and a half ago. She began seeing a therapist for depression every week through Medicaid but recently has not been able to go because her car broke down and she cannot afford to fix it.

Her partner works at the Ford plant in the area, but his schedule has been sporadic. They have two small children and at this point, she said, they are "saving quarters for diapers."

"Every time I think about money, I shut down because there is none," Ms. Linville said. "I get major panic attacks. I just don't know what we're going to do."

Nearly half of the adults surveyed admitted to feeling embarrassed or ashamed most of the time or sometimes as a result of being out of work. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the traditional image of men as breadwinners, men were significantly more likely than women to report feeling ashamed most of the time.

There was a pervasive sense from the poll that the American dream had been upended for many. Nearly half of those polled said they felt in danger of falling out of their social class, with those out of work six months or more feeling especially vulnerable. Working-class respondents felt at risk in the greatest numbers.

Nearly half of respondents said they did not have health insurance, with the vast majority citing job loss as a reason, a notable